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ABSTRACT

The structure of the grammar of Shabo, a little-known and unclassified Nilo-Saharan language of south-central Ethiopia, is described briefly. An introductory section describes the geographic area in which the language is used and reviews previous research on Shabo. Subsequent sections explain basic features of Shabo phonology (consonants, consonant alternations, vowels, suprasegmentals), morphology (nouns, verbs), and syntax (noun phrase, conjunctions, noun case markings, postpositions, question words, word order). A brief note on lexicon is also included. Contains 11 references. (MSE)

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NILO-SAHARAN

Volume 7

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Edited by
M. Lionel Bender

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26. A SKETCH OF SHABO GRAMMAR

ANBESSA TEFERRA

1. Introduction

1.1 The language and the people

Shabo is a little-known and still not definitely classified Nilo-Saharan language.[1] Two attempts have been made to classify it (following Bender's first observations, see 1.2 below). Peter Unseth and I (Anbessa and Unseth 1989) made a sketchy phonological, morphological, and lexical comparison with nearby Nilo-Saharan and Afrasian languages. We concluded tentatively that Shabo's origin may be within East Sudanic. Fleming (this volume) examines four alternative hypotheses. After comparing the Swadesh 200-item list of Shabo with Majang, Amharic, Afrasian, and Nilo-Saharan, he concludes that Shabo is a major branch of the Nilo-Saharan phylum, close to Koman and that.. "In my opinion Shabo *is* the resident Koman-type language in its region".

Recently (March 1990) I made a field trip to Shabo country and returned with more lexica and a few additional grammatical data complete with tape recordings of the same. A careful comparison of these data in the future may clarify further Shabo's characteristics and position.

Shabo is spoken in south-central Fthiopia, in the present administrative region of Kefa (formerly the area was part of Illubabor) by a people also calling themselves Shabo. The Shabo live among the Majang and the Mocha (see Maps 1 and 2). They are multilingual with Majang and Mocha and a few speak Oromo; the Majang influence is strongest. They number about 600, living in the three districts (Amh. *awrajja)* of Yekki, Mocha, and Nanno, which were all part of Mocha Awrajja prior to June 1988.[2] The Shabo were traditionally nomadic hunter/gatherers, but beginning in about June 1986 about 120 settled in a village called Kaabo (Gubbeti in their own language) on the edge of a small lake, approximately 11 kilometers northwest of Mett'i. They now number 285. An elementary school through grade two was opened for Shabo settlers in 1989.[3]

1.2 Review of previous work

In the linguistic literature Shabo has been referred to as "Mikeyir" (alternatively Mekeyir, Mekeyer, Mikair). However, the word Shabo is preferred by the speakers to refer to themselves and their language. "Mikeyir" is a Majang name for them, viewed by the Shabo as derogatory.[4]

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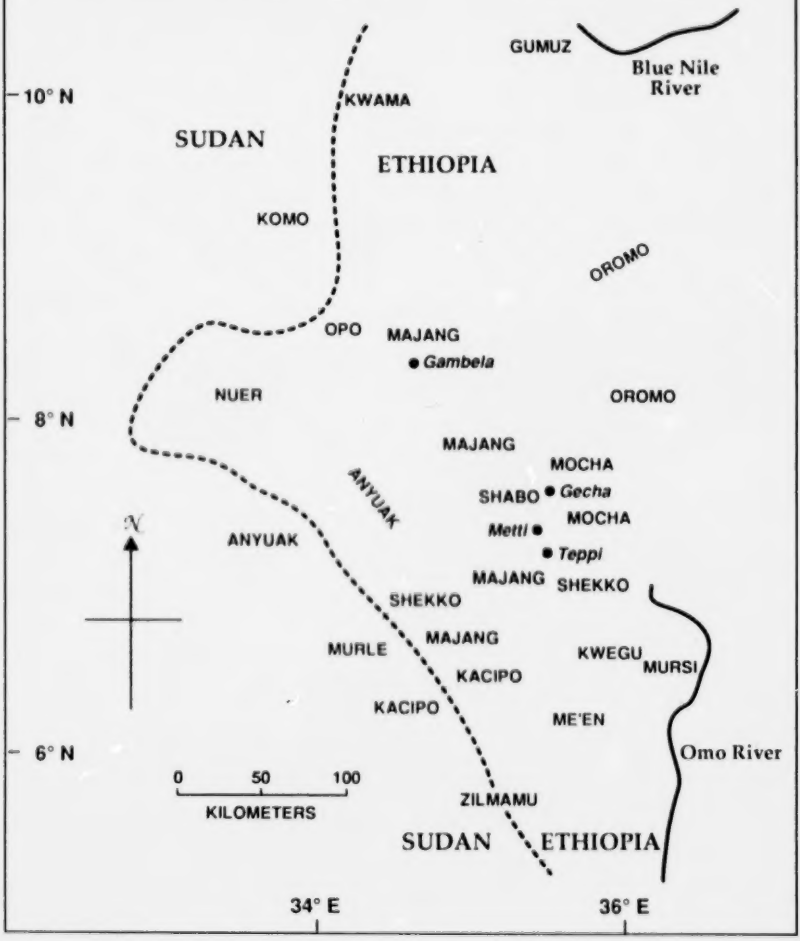
MAP

LOCATION OF SHABO AND NEIGHBORING LANGUAGES
[Based on Stauder (1971: 3) and Schadeberg (1981: 289, 290)]



SKETCH OF SHABO GRAMMAR

The first published work on Shabo was that of Bender (1977), based on the word list collected by Harvey Hoekstra. He asserted that Shabo (he called it Mekeyir) is a Nilo-Saharan language belonging to the Surma group of Eastern Sudanic. He published the word list (1983b) with further comments about classification. The only other works are those of Peter Unseth and me and by Fleming, mentioned under 1.1. above.

2. Phonology

2.1 Consonants

The following table contains tentative consonant phonemes of Shabo. Tentative phonemic status is given if a phone occurs in various positions in a word. Segments suspected of not being phonemes are put in square brackets.

		labial	alveolar	palatal	velar	glottal
plosives	vl.	p	t	c	k	ʔ
	vd.	b	d	j		g
ejectives		p'	t'	c'	k'	
implosives		ɓ	ɗ			
nasals		m	n	ɲ	ŋ	
fricatives		[f], f	[s]	[š]		h
liquids: lateral			l			
flap			r			
glides		w		y		

Some comments are in order regarding the above consonant chart, which is generally similar to that of Surma languages. The presence of ejective stops distinguishes Shabo from the neighboring languages such as Majang, which lacks them. In our previous paper (1989: 406) we speculated that ejective stops may be allophones of non-ejective stops because almost all of their appearences are word-initial. However, this may not be true. My present large data base contains ejectives in word-medial position too, as illustrated in (1) *c'oot'o* animal, (2) *šuk'uma* belly, (3) *iic'i* dry, (4) *t'op'a* coward.

2.1.1 Consonant alternations

The bilabial stop /p/ seems to show free variation with [f] and [f], which may be allophones.

(5)	i.	funk'a ~ ɟunk'a ~ punk'a	ashes
	ii.	afan ~ apan	dance
	iii.	hanšep ~ hanšef	some

There is also an alternation among the sibilants [s], [š], and [c] on one hand and [z] and [j] on the other. These variations are similar to those in neighboring Majang, (Bender 1983a: 117) and also Me'en (Ricci 1972: 113).[5]

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(6)	i.	kossa ~ koššа ~ kocca	bad
	ii.	seemo ~ šeemo	clothing
	iii.	se ~ še	eye
(7)		zeefa ~ jeefa	fly

[h]/[k] and [h]/[x] alternations were also observed.[6]

(8a)	i.	hando ~ kando	left
	ii.	há ~ ká	kill!
	iii.	huttu ~ kutti	knee
(8b)	i.	oha ~ oxa	sun
	ii.	aha ~ axa	house

2.1.2 Examples illustrating consonants in various positions

Below are words showing the phones/phonemes in various positions. Most of the examples illustrate the phones/phonemes in word-initial and word-medial positions. I tried to collect contrastive examples which show the phones/phonemes before or after various vowels, but the scantiness of the data limited this type of examples. In the data below, phones whose status is not clear are put in square brackets. Moreover, tone is marked where appropriate.

/f/	fiffi	blow!	/p/	poont	on
	fù	fall!			
	efu	hand		hoopu	breathe
				bap	two
/ʃ/	aʃura	pierce			
/t/	tiŋ	I	/k/	kaw	tooth/mouth
	kotó	girl		uttuku	hold!
	hɛllet	bird		c'iinka	morning
/ʔ/	gaʔam	catch!			
/h/	hiya	brother	/p'/	p'illa	bite!
	moha	now		hoop'a	sky
				tap'al	vomit!
/t'/	t'op'a	coward	/k'/	k'endɗe	cold
	c'oot'o	wild animal		c'eek'a	feather/hair
/c'/	c'ota	cut!	/ɓ/	ɓeeše	stomach
	iic'i	dry		ɓaɓu	liver
/ɗ/	ɗanka	good	/b/	beero	bed
	c'unɗe	narrow		apal	hit!
	emɗ(a)	boat (Majang)			

/d/	dú	breast	/g/	goodo	elephant
	handa	tongue		ɗeego	crocodile
	dʌnd	maternal uncle			
/c/	cicoku	jump!	/j/	juku	chief
	bicca	foot		minja	cow
	weyec	all		helenj	saliva
/s/	siyo	leaf	/š/	šiki	knife
	sasale	baby		booši	wide
	bʌs	day			
/m/	manka	here	/n/	no	go!
	imaha	bone		k'ona	tree
	ihom	count!		huwwan	chest
/ŋ/	ŋa	that	/ɲ/	ɲeeda	afterbirth
	c'aŋa	fish		aɲɲan	rub!
	tiŋ	I		eeɲɲa	termite
/l/	lunduse	heart	/r/	rooga	star
	salla	laugh!		diiri	forehaed
	ul	husband		paar	snake
/w/	wanga	frog	/y/	yiŋ	we
	sʌwu	ant		gaye	enough
				soy	bee

2.2 Vowels

Nine vowels are tentatively posited. Of these, five have long counterparts.

	front	central	back	long	
high	i	ɪ	u	ii	uu
mid	e	ʌ	o	ee	oo
low		a	ɔ	aa	

The five vowels which have long counterparts are the "tense" *i, e, a, u,* and *o*. Vowel length will be discussed in section 2.3.2 below.

2.3 Suprasegmentals

2.3.1 Gemination

In Shabo consonants may be geminated, at least phonetically. A few near-minimal pairs were found.

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(9) i. sɪna honey
ii. sonna ~ šonna nose

2.3.2 Vowel length

Vowels also show at least phonetic length as illustrated by (10) *c'iiŋi* black, (11) *teema* far, (12) *aat* cook, (13) *guula* heavy, (14) *goodo* elephant.

2.3.3 Tone

Shabo is definitely a tonal language. Although grammatical tone is lacking in my data base, one minimal pair of lexical tone was found: *hà* "kill!" vs. *hâ* "meat".

3. Morphology

3.1 Noun morphology

3.1.1 Subject pronouns

Unlike most Nilo-Saharan languages, Shabo marks gender in independent pronouns. In fact, surprisingly, it marks gender in all persons both in singular and plural. Very interesting also is the discovery of a *common* 2nd person plural. Based on Hoekstra's data in which independent pronouns were not marked for gender, Bender 1983b made some observations. He noted that pronouns of Mikeyir (Shabo) "do not provide obvious support for the Nilo-Saharan hypothesis.... [They are an] argument for Omotic" (1983b: 353). [This was based on the forms compared to "Mao" languages, e.g. t in 1 sg., not on gender considerations. Ed.] He concluded "A tantalizing idea, then, is that Mikeyir had an Omotic base" (1983b: 353).

Although gender-marking in independent pronouns is a feature of some Omotic languages, this feature alone does not prove Shabo has an Omotic base. On the contrary, there are some Nilo-Saharan languages such as Komuz which mark gender (Bender in press) and this may be a piece of morphological evidence relating Shabo to Komuz. The pronoun chart of Shabo is given below.

	sing.	plur.		
1st m.	tiŋ	yiŋ	2nd m. kuku	sitalaɣ
f.	taŋa	ann	f. kungu	siyaɣɣ
			common	subaɣ
3rd m.	yi	otalaɣ (final -ɣ unreleased)		
f.	uŋa	odda		

3.1.2 Object pronouns

The object pronoun suffix is *-kak*. The final *k* is so lenis that sometimes it is not heard at all.

	sing	plur.			
1st m.	tiŋ-kak	yiŋ-kak	2nd m.	kuk-ak	sitala-kak
f.	taŋa-kak	ann-kak	f.	kuŋg-ak	siyak-kak
3rd m.	yi-kak	otala-kak	com.		suba-kak
f.	uŋa-kak	odda-kak			

In the second-person object pronouns *k* is syncopated. However, except for the second singular feminine, it is not clear which *k* is syncopated: the final *k* of independent pronouns or the initial *k* of the suffix *-kak*.

In sentences with transitive verbs, *-k* marks direct objects (DO).

(15) ufa bak'k'e-k ye
man spear -DO saw
A man saw a spear.

According to Bender (1976: 445) *-k* as an object marker is found in at least five Eastern Sudanic groups, but not in Surma or Komuz.

3.1.3 Possessive suffixes

Possessive pronouns are formed with the genitive *-ke* and also by possessive sufixes *-e* and *-i*. Use of *-ke* involves some morphophonemic changes.

	sing.	plur.			
1st m.	tiŋ-ke	yiŋ-ke	2nd m.	kuk-ke	sitalak-ke
f.	taŋa-ke	ann-ke	f.	kuŋg-e	siyak-ke
3rd m.	yi-ke	otala-ke	com.	subak-ke	
f.	uŋ-ge	odda-ke			

The possessive suffix *-ke* is used with nouns to indicate the possessor.

(16) ufa-ke ɓak'k'e mati
man-GEN spear big
The man's spear is big.

(17) ufa-ke bicca mati
man-GEN foot big
The man's foot is big.

The above sentences also illustrate that Shabo does not make a distinction between alienable and inalienable possession.

Shabo also marks possession by means of two other morphemes: *-e* and *-i*. Consonant-final stems take *-i* while vowel-final stems take *-e*.

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(18) (*baako* chicken)
bakk -e c'eek'a
chicken-GEN feather
A chicken's feather

(19) (*ufa* man)
uf -e bak'k'e
man-GEN spear
A man's spear

(20) (*paar* snake)
paar -i handa
snake-GEN tongue
A snake's tongue

(21) (*hælet* bird)
hælet-i c'eek'a
bird -GEN feather
A bird's feather

3.1.4 Demonstrative pronouns

Shabo has no gender-marking in demonstratives[7]: *ma*, this, *ŋa(tum)*, that. The Shabo demonstrative *ŋa* is identical with Mursi (Turton and Bender 1976: 545, 547). Examples of demonstratives (note *yero* many, also used as a general plural marker):

(22)	ma ufa	this man	(26)	inka umɓa	this woman
(23)	ŋa(tum) ufa	that man	(27)	ŋa umɓa	that woman
(24)	ma ufe yero	these men	(28)	ma umɓe yero	these women
(25)	ŋa(tum) ufe yero	those men	(29)	ŋa umɓe yero	those women

3.1.5 Number

Singular is marked by -t (only for the first person) in the verb morphology. On the other hand *-k* may be a plural suffix, although it is difficult to ascertain this: in most instances my informants formed a plural by means of free morphemes meaning "many": *yero*, and *woto* (latter used in examples to follow).

	sing.	plur.	pl. gloss
(30)	kuro	kure woto	donkeys
(31)	goodo	goode woto	elephants
(32)	zefa	zefe woto	flies
(33)	kilta	kilte woto	rats
(34)	juku	juki woto	chiefs
(35)	ɗok'k'u	ɗok'k'i woto	houses

It will be noted that in plural formation, root-final vowels of singular nouns are fronted -u > -*i* and -o, -a > -e.

As has already been stated -*k* as a plural suffix was elicited in very few sentences. Such a plural marker is very common in Nilo-Saharan languages, including neighboring Majang (cf. Bender 1983b: 125-126).

(36) dok'k'u-k -ke juku
house -pl-GEN chief
The chief's houses

(37) minja-k abiye
cow -pl came
The cows came.

The word *c'o* "boy" has an irregular plural *k'ufa* "boys".[8]

3.1.6 The numeral system

The numeral system of Shabo, like that of many other Nilo-Saharan languages, is based on five, ten, and twenty (counting on fingers and toes of a person/persons). The numeration system is thus clearly Nilo-Saharan rather than Omotic, which is generally based on ten. Shabo shows some lexical borrowing from Majang.

1. iŋki	6. tuula-iŋki
2. bap	7. tuula-bap
3. jiita	8. tuula-jiita
4. aŋan	9. tuula-aŋan
5. tuul	10. bap'-if-iŋki lit. two-hands-one
20. iŋki-ufe-koor	lit. one-person-complete

The forms for "three", "four", and "five" are from Majang.

3.2 Verb morphology

3.2.1 Verb inflection

Earlier atttempts to gather data on verb morphology were very frustrating. During recent field trips, however, I was able to collect better and more reliable data. Nevertheless, verb morphology still remains a difficult area in linguistic study of Shabo.

The problem was largely due to translation, everything being elicited through a Majang translator who himself may not be aware of tense distinctions in Amharic. This resulted in inconsistent responses of my Shabo language helpers. In addition, using several different language helpers has compounded the problem.

I will first present the paradigms; the analysis follows. The conjugations are based on two verbs: *t'a* "eat" and *hitta* "stand". These verbs were chosen because they illustrate a difference in verb suffixes of third-person plurals during perfect conjugation. It seems that the difference in the verb suffixes may have to do with tonal differences in the two verbs, although I cannot ascertain this at the moment.

Imperfect

1 sg. ɗebe ge-t	t'a-gg/hitta-gg
2 sg. ɗebe gek	t'a-gg/hitta-gg
3 sg. ɗebe ge	t'a-gg/hitta-gg
1 pl. ɗebe-gge ap	t'a-gg/hitta-gg
2 pl. ɗebe-gge	t'a-cce-gg/hitta-cce-gg
3 pl. ɗebe-ge	t'a-dde-gg/hitta-dde-gg

"I, etc., will eat/stand up".

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Perfect

1 sg. ɗebe qi-t t'a-y/hitt-e
2 sg. ɗebe qik t'a-y/hitt-e
3 sg. ɗebe-k t'a-y/hitt-e

1 pl. ɗebe-k ap t'a-y/hitt-e
2 pl. ɗebe-k t'a-cce/hitta-cce
3 pl. ɗebe-k t'a-dde/hitta-dde
"I, etc., ate/stood up".

Present Perfect

1 sg. ɗebe qi-t t'a-kkus/hitta-kkus
2 sg. ɗebe qik t'a-kkus/hitta-kkus
3 sg. ɗebe-k t'a-kkus/hitta-kkus

1 pl. ɗebe-k ap t'a-kkus/hitta-kkus
2 pl. ɗebe-k t'a-cce-kus/hitta-cce-kus
3 pl. ɗebe-k t'a-dde-kus/hitta-dde-kus
"I, etc., have eaten/stood up".

Present Continuous

1 sg. ɗebe qi-t-n t'a/hitta
2 sg. ɗebe qik-r t'a/hitta
3 sg. ɗebe qi-n t'a/hitta

1 pl. ɗebe ap-n t'a/hitta
2 pl. ɗebe qi-n t'a-cc/hitta-cc
3 pl. ɗebe qi-n t'a-dd/hitta-dd
"I, etc., am eating/standing up".

It is not clear whether the *g(V)(C)* complex should be treated as an affix or a free morpheme. That is the reason why I have left it as a word and not as a suffix. In addition, it may be that in some instances, *-k ~ -g* is found. Moreover, the syncopation of one *k* of *-kkus* in second and third person plural should be noted.

3.2.2 Analysis of inflectional morphemes

On the basis of the paradigms given above, the following tense/aspect, number, and person morphemes are tentatively postulated.

3.2.2.1 Tense/aspect

It seems that the morpheme *ɗebe* is a verb of presence (Amharic *all-i*). Kernok, my Shabo informant, told me that *ɗeb-* means "he is present". Also, when I asked him a word for "bald" he gave me the phrase *c'eek'a ɗeb-be* (lit. hair-he is present-Neg). The morpheme *ɗebe* may also serve as a copula in present continuous tense.

Imperfect, perfect, present perfect, and continuous tense are marked by: *-qq*, *-y ~ -e*, *-kkus*, and *-n*, respectively. The alternation found in perfect conjugation of singular persons seems to be related to tone pattern of the stem verb. Moreover, the vowels found in the person-number-complex morpheme may also indicate tense/aspect (cf. 3.2.2.2 below).

3.2.2.2 Person and number

My analysis of person and number morphemes is tentative. However, it is still possible to make some deductions.

The first, second, and third person plurals are marked by: *ap*, *cc(e)*, and *dd(e)*, respectively. Singular persons are marked by the *g(V)(C)* complex morpheme. But it is not possible for me at this stage to make a detailed analysis of this morpheme.

Regarding number, it seems that singular is marked by *-t* for the first person singular in the *g(V)(C)* complex. The morpheme *-t* is a common Nilo-Saharan singular marker. Plural is marked by *-k ~ -g* for all plural persons. This coincides with *-k*, the common Nilo-Saharan plural morpheme.

In examples in text to follow, sometimes the verb forms will be glossed in an abbreviated fashion, for convenience, e.g. "kills-he" rather than "kills-3 m. sg. Impf." In most cases, the paradigmatic TMA markers do not occur. One of the reasons for this may be that the deletion of TMA markers under different mophological constructions may be a rule in Shabo. Translation of temporal notions, i.e. tense/aspect, is also another perennial problem. Because of insufficient data, however, I cannot comment more than this.

3.2.3 Imperative

In Shabo the second-person singular masculine imperative is an uninflected root and therefore functions as a citation form. Depending on their endings, two kinds of imperatives are distinguished: consonant-final and vowel-final.

(39) am	come!	(40) p'illa	bite!
(41) apal	hit!	(42) nó	go!

3.2.4 Negation

The negative morpheme is *be*. There is an additional particle *ge* which appears to be related to tense/aspect. This is evidenced by the fact that *be* is the negative of an imperfect while *be-ge* (abbreviated NegPrf) is the negative of perfect and present perfect. The morpheme *dębe* and the *g(V)(t)* complex are deleted in negative conjugations.

(43) (i) get no-qq
1 impf go-1 impf
I will go.

(ii) tiŋ no-be
I go-NEG
I will not go.

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(44) (i) tiŋ-kak obole
I -DO hit-he
He hit me.

(ii) tiŋ-kak obol be-ge
I -DO hit NegPrf
He didn't hit me.

(45) (i) ɗebe-k am-kus
3 PP come
He has come.

(ii) yi am be-ge
he come NegPrf
He hasn't come.

(PP = Present-Perfect)

The negative used in stative sentences is also *be*.

(46) (i) ma kaan
this dog
This is a dog.

(ii) ma kaan be
this dog NEG
This isn't a dog.

Not all negatives involve the element *be*. The negative of a second singular masculine imperative is *p'ikin*.

(47) (i) wo! drink!

(ii) wo p'ikin! drink-NEG!

3.2.5 Verbal nouns

The verbal noun has the same form as the 2 sg. masc. impv.

(48) t'a ɗanka
eat good
Eating is good.

(49) afal kôšša
fight bad
Fighting is bad.

4. Syntax

The syntactic data, even more than morphology, are fragmentary. Therefore, we have to content ourselves with discussions of notions such as noun phrase, conjunctions, postpositions, etc.

4.1 Noun phrase

Within a noun phrase, adjectives precede nouns.

(50) c'iiŋi kaan-gak gi-t haa -y
black dog -DO 1 Prf-sg kill-PP
I killed a black dog.

Numerals precede adjectives and among adjectives those for size precede color adjectives.

(51) bap mat c'iiŋ kaan
two big black dog
Two big black dogs

4.2 Conjunctions

The basic Shabo conjunction is *ŋa* and is repeated after each conjoined item; whether *ŋa* is a suffix or word is not clear.

(52) moyi ŋa moye ŋa tap'ale
salt and coffee and want-I
I want salt and coffee.

(53) minja ŋa kemta ŋa ame
cow and goat and came
A cow and a goat came.

4.3 Noun case markings

Shabo expresses various case notions by means of case-marking suffixes. These are: nominative *Ø*, instrumental *-uk ~-ik*, accusative *-kak ~-gak-k*, ablative *-ti*, and genitive *-ke ~-e*.

(54) ufa abbiye
man came-he
A man came.

(55) (i) k'ona-k ɗebe c'ot-awe
tree -ACC PP cut PAS-PRF
The tree was cut.

(ii) tiŋ-kak apale
I -ACC hit-he
He hit me.

(56) (i) ufa-ke ɗokk'u mati
man-GEN house big
The man's house is big.

(ii) uf -e ɗokk'u mati
man-GEN house big
The man's house is big.

(57) qum -uk tiŋ-ka apale
stick-with I -ACC hit-he
He hit me with a stick.

(58) kaabbo-ti qit-n ame
Kaabbo-from I-sg. pf. come-I
I came from Kaabbo.

4.4 Postpositions

Shabo makes use of postpositions to express various adverbial functions. Among them are: *takkant* "in", *poont* "on", and *ka* "to".

(59) ɗok'k'u takkant
house in
in the house

(60) bic'iro poont-ik ame
horse on -with came-I
I came on horseback.

(61) teppi-ka qi-t no
Teppi-to I -PP go
I went to Teppi.

4.5 Question words

The question words of Shabo so far identified are: *neé* "who?", *hamma* "where, which, what?". The form *hamma* was found as both source and goal.

(62) kuku neé
thou who
Who are you?

(63) hamma -kak ame
where -DO came-he
Where did he come from? (source)

(64) hama -kak no-y
where-DO go-Prf
Where did he go? (goal)

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4.6 Word order

The basic word order in Shabo is SOV.

(65) ma ufa ɗepe ɗebe-k hà -y
S O V
this man lion kill-Prf
This man killed a lion.

Pronominal subjects are optional in surface structures. Shabo, being a morphologizing language, copies person-number features onto the verb.

(66) tiŋ-ka ɗebek-apale
O V
I -D -hit-he
He beat me.

In bi-transitive sentences, usually, the indirect object (IO) precedes the direct object.

(67) c'o-ka bak'e-k ɗebe gi-t hamme
IO DO
boy-IO spear-DO 1 -sg give-I
I gave the spear to the boy.

However, my informant also accepted the reverse order i.e., with the elements in the order DO IO.

5. Conclusions

In this brief article, I have presented some facts on phonology, morphology, and syntax of Shabo. I am interested in the synchronic analysis of Shabo and I also want to say a word or two about the classification of Shabo. Shabo is definitely Nilo-Saharan and not Omotic. There is evidence for this from the areas of phonology, morphology, and lexicon.

5.1 Phonology

(i) Unlike Omotic languages, which have five-vowel systems (five long/five short), Shabo has more vowel qualities.

(ii) The consonant chart looks like that of Surmic languages.

(iii) The frequent alternations among the sibilants is also typical of Majang and other Nilo-Saharan languages.

(iv) Shabo is tonal like most Nilo-Saharan languages.

5.2 Morphology

(i) The numeral system, being base-five and involving counting of fingers and toes, is typically Nilo-Saharan.

(ii) Shabo marks some singulars in verbal conjugation by *-t* and plurals by *-k* and this is common in many Nilo-Saharan languages.

(iii) Gender-marking in pronouns may relate Shabo to Komuz. According to Bender (1990), Komuz is one of the few Ethiopian Nilo-Saharan languages that do mark gender.

(iv) The Shabo demonstrative *ŋa* is identical to a Mursi form.

5.3 Lexicon

Although this article does not include a Shabo vocabulary, our earlier comparisons (Anbessa and Unseth 1989) show that Shabo's lexicon is mostly Nilo-Saharan. Words from Omotic may be simply borrowings from neighboring languages such as Mocha (Fleming's article in this volume supports this view).

All this linguistic evidence definitely puts Shabo under the Nilo-Saharan language family. The next more daunting task will be finding the exact position of Shabo within Nilo-Saharan. My immediate task is just this, for which I will use my recently enlarged data base to make comparisons, especially with the Komuz Family.

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NOTES

1. The data for this paper were collected in January and February of 1985, 1988, and 1989, and in March of 1990.

2. Personal communication, Ato Indeshaw C'oriito, now administrator of Mocha Awrajja, formerly administrator of Godare, Illubabor.

3. Ato Indeshaw told Peter Unseth and me that he encouraged the Shabo to settle, use their own language, and not be dominated by the Majang and coerced into using the Majang language.

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4. For the Majangir, the term "Mikeyir" means "people who speak an unintelligible language" (Tinsae Rite, personal communication). [Ed.: The first mention of the Shabo in the literature may be that of Stauder (1970: 109) who refers to the "Mikair" as a clan or "remnants of a tribe, living with Majangir...towards the town of Gesha"; they are said to be nomadic hunters; he says nothing of their language. Stauder says that the idea of the Mikair as the "original" inhabitants of the area would be pure speculation.]

5. The alternations may be due to the Shabo practice of removing the bottom four front teeth. This is an areal practice and is observed also among the Majangir (Bender 1983a: 117 says bottom two in this case, but this was a casual observation, p.c. Bender 1990).

6. Where one informant, Zelalem, has *k*, another, Kernok, consistently has *h*. Moreover, where Zelalem has single consonants and vowels, Kernok has long counterparts. Variations were also observed among other informants. This may indicate that Shabo has dialectal differences. However, I consider Kernok's data to be more accurate because he is a native-speaker whereas Zelalam's father is a Mocha who speaks fluent Amharic.

7. In some of my data *ŋa* "that/those" was used with masculine also. Zelalem, my earlier informant, expressed subject pronouns by means of demonstrative pronouns. For example he gave *ma ufa* "this man" when I asked him for third singular masculine pronoun. (Ed.: This occurs also in Hoekstra's list).

8. There is a similar phenomenon in Sidamo of Highland East Cushitic: *beetto* "child" has an irregular plural *ooso* "children".

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